

RELEASE IN PART  
B5, B6

**Fischer, Kyle G**

**From:** Harf, Marie E <harfme@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:31 PM  
**To:** Hickey, Lauren A; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Cc:** Beechem, Stephanie; Werberg, Samuel (Cairo)  
**Subject:** Re: Urgent

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**From:** HarfME@state.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 5:30 PM  
**To:** Hickey, Lauren A; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Cc:** Beechem, Stephanie  
**Subject:** Re: Urgent

B5

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**From:** Hickey, Lauren A  
**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 5:26 PM  
**To:** Harf, Marie E; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Cc:** Beechem, Stephanie  
**Subject:** FW: Urgent

Marie – Any insight here? The transcript is online

B5

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

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**From:** Rosen, James [mailto:James.Rosen@FOXNEWS.COM]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:21 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Kirby, John  
**Cc:** Toner, Mark C; Beechem, Stephanie; Hickey, Lauren A  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

At the 12/2/13 briefing, I confronted Jen Psaki with the false statement made to me by Toria Nuland at the 2/6/13 briefing. That earlier exchange went like this:

**ROSEN:** There have been reports that intermittently, and outside of the formal P-5+1 mechanisms the Obama Administration, or members of it, have conducted direct, secret, bilateral talks with Iran. Is that true or false?

**NULAND:** We have made clear, as the Vice President did at Munich, that in the context of the larger P-5+1 framework, we would be prepared to talk to Iran bilaterally. *But with regard to the kind of thing that you're talking about on a government-to-government level, no.*

Of course, the secret Iran talks had begun eight months before that exchange.

The transcript for the 12/2/13 briefing is below, with the yellow part signifying the part that has been edited out of DOS's video of the briefing on its website and YT channel.

We want to know why and when DOS inserted a white-flash into the 12/2/13 video to censor the part where I asked Jen Psaki about Toria Nuland's false statement on the Iran talks (and Psaki in essence said the administration needed "privacy").

All of this is obviously relevant in light of the NYTM questions about whether Rhodes/DOS et al misled the people, and the press, about the origins and timing of the Iran talks.

If we don't hear back by 5:45p – we just discovered this act of censorship – we are going to report it as such in our 6p show.

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James Rosen  
Chief Washington Correspondent  
Host, "The Foxhole"  
Twitter: @JamesRosenFNC

(office)  
(mobile)

B6

B6

Author, Cheney One on One

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**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K [<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=mailto:trudeauek@state.gov>]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:13 PM  
**To:** Rosen, James; Kirby, John  
**Cc:** Toner, Mark C; Beechem, Stephanie; Hickey, Lauren A  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

James, I am solo in town today – Kirby and Toner on road. Adding Beechem and Hickey on this.  
Not sure I understand Q.

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**From:** Rosen, James [<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=mailto:James.Rosen@FOXNEWS.COM>]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:10 PM  
**To:** Kirby, John  
**Cc:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Toner, Mark C  
**Subject:** Urgent

Need a call from one of you in the next thirty minutes or so. We are going to go to air with the information below, in the context of the whole Ben Rhodes controversy, at 6p, and we'd like to give DOS a chance to clear it up. My contact info is below. The relevant info is also below, courtesy of one of our video librarians in the Fox News Washington bureau. The basic question is why – and when – DOS censored its video of the highlighted portion of the 12/2/13 briefing (26:58 into the clip) with a white flash, on both the DOS web page and the DOS YT channel. Yours cordially, James

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 James Rosen  
 Chief Washington Correspondent  
 Host, "The Foxhole"  
 Twitter: @JamesRosenFNC

[redacted] (office)

[redacted] (mobile)

Author, *Cheney One on One*

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Highlighted below. The video posted online here

(<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://video.state.gov/en/video/2886914568001>) ends with Psaki responding to Roz's question saying "....and so that has not changed that."

White flash on screen at 26:58 and then it picks up with Roz talking again.

#### TRANSCRIPT:

1:54 p.m. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Happy --

QUESTION: Happy belated birthday.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you. Thank you very much. Twenty-two. It's glorious. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: And you will be 22 for the next --

MS. PSAKI: I will be.

QUESTION: What, 10, 15 years?

MS. PSAKI: At least, at least. Well, I have nothing at the top, so Matt, let's go to what's on your mind.

QUESTION: Let's see. I have a lot --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: -- but nothing is really worth starting with, so let's just start with the Secretary's trip.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: Both -- excluding the middle stop in Moldova, at the beginning, how much of the NAC do you expect is going to be concentrated on Afghanistan and then talking about the BSA? Will there be any Afghan officials there to talk with? And then -- well, that'll be that one question for --

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Well, we'll clearly, as we typically do, be doing a briefing en route about the trip and about our visit to the NATO Ministerial tomorrow, where we will venture to have more specific details about who will be attending. Obviously, Afghanistan and the ongoing presence there post-2014 of the United States and of NATO will certainly be a big topic of discussion. But I will let our briefers outline more specifics en route to Brussels.

QUESTION: All right. Well, I was going to ask about the Middle East but -- as well, the stop in Israel and the PA. But if you're just -- are you going to give me the same answer, wait for the briefing on the plane?

MS. PSAKI: I likely will, yes.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, then never mind.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: And then quickly on Afghanistan --

MS. PSAKI: Sure, Lesley.

QUESTION: Is -- what further is happening as far as trying to resolve this issue with Afghanistan?

MS. PSAKI: Well --

QUESTION: As far as -- is it true that --

MS. PSAKI: The BSA.

QUESTION: The -- exactly.

MS. PSAKI: The signing, I assume.

QUESTION: Is it true that Special Envoy Dobbins has gone -- is on his way to Afghanistan?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any announcements at this point on travel for him or anyone else. Obviously, our team on the ground, Ambassador Cunningham and others, have been in close contact. At this point, we've made our position clear,

and so have the Afghan people. Signing the BSA soon is the path forward, as we've said many times, to sustaining a partnership between the United States and Afghanistan to support Afghans in achieving lasting peace, security, and development. That's the message that we're conveying at every level. And as we've said before but important to reiterate here, given it's a week later now: We -- deferring the signature of the agreement until after next year's election is not viable. It would not provide Afghans with the certainty that they deserve regarding their future in the critical months leading to the elections, nor would it provide the United States and NATO allies the clarity necessary for a potential post-2014 military presence.

So we're continuing to convey that. Our team on the ground is certainly hard at work. I don't have any travel announcements. If that changes, we'll certainly let all of you know.

**QUESTION:** Has Secretary spoken to President Karzai in the last couple of days on BSA?

**MS. PSAKI:** He has not spoken with him in the last couple of days.

**QUESTION:** And the Pentagon today said that this is not the end of it; after BSA is signed, the U.S. and Afghanistan have to negotiate and sign their agreement called SOFA, and that would be done by the State Department. Has any process started on SOFA, signing of SOFA with Afghanistan?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to look more specifically at what they said. Maybe you're referring to the NATO SOFA that they may have to negotiate and sign, I believe, as a step? But for our purposes, there's the signing; it goes through parliament, then it would have to be signed again. Obviously, as you all are very familiar with, this doesn't outline a specific number for a troop presence, so there would be a great deal of planning in regards to that that DOD would certainly be very engaged with. But in terms of that, I'd have to look at specifically what they said. I'm not familiar with that --

**QUESTION:** Is December 21<sup>st</sup> the redline, the deadline for signing of BSA, after which you will begin preparing for all troops pull out from Afghanistan post 2014.

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not going to get into new redlines or deadlines today, I will say. But on the trip question, well, as you all know, a decision hasn't been made. You would know if it had been. It's not our preference, but no troops is certainly a potential outcome for Afghanistan if there is no BSA. So that is, again, not our preference, but natural that planning would have to take place for all different options.

**QUESTION:** Have you tried to understand why President Karzai is doing what he's doing or conducting himself the way he has? Do you have a clearer picture than we do, for instance?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't know that I have any further insight than you do. Obviously, the Secretary spoke with him last week, as you all well know. We continue to press our case for why this should be signed as quickly as possible, but I don't have any analysis of particular actions or comments in Afghanistan.

**QUESTION:** So you think that he's perhaps more concerned about his personal safety post the elections?

**MS. PSAKI:** I will let you, Said, do your own analysis. I don't have any other analysis on it.

Do we have any more on Afghanistan?

**QUESTION:** Just the trip?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** For those of us who are interested in Moldova --

**MS. PSAKI:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** -- could you just tell us why stop in Moldova? What's the importance? We see the winery, et cetera.

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Moldova is a country that has taken a number of important reform steps in recent years. They have -- they're taking steps to help grow their economy, and wine is obviously a significant export. But they have a number of exports they also work with. And given the steps they've taken, the Secretary felt it would be an important opportunity to pay a visit. You'd have to check my history and facts here, but I believe he may be, if not the first, one of the first Secretaries to pay a bilateral visit to Moldova.

**QUESTION:** And also it comes, obviously, right after Ukraine decided not to sign the agreement with the EU.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Moldova did. So you could read into this that the Secretary wants to buck them up or give them something, a sign of support.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we had planned this trip -- this trip was in the works before that decision was made. But certainly, they have put a number of reforms in place and they're working hard on their economy and the -- if -- the Secretary felt it was important to highlight that.

**QUESTION:** Following on that --

**QUESTION:** Okay. Can I go over just to Afghanistan for one very briefly?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Okay, and then we'll go to Anne.

QUESTION: I was gone last week so I'm -- most of last week, so what -- did the Secretary speak with Karzai before or after Ambassador Rice was there?

MS. PSAKI: Let's see. He spoke with Karzai -- President Karzai -- I'd have to look back. I believe it was prior to her visit. Let me double check that for you to make sure.

QUESTION: So the last senior official to speak with Karzai, as far as you know, was Ambassador Rice.

MS. PSAKI: I believe that's correct, yes.

QUESTION: Just following on the Moldova for Ukraine substitution, in saying that Secretary Kerry would not, as had been widely expected, attend the OSCE -- when you said that, I don't know, about 10 days ago or so --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- we were just at the very beginning of this whole episode.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And at that point you said it was scheduling issues that had -- it would force his cancellation. Are you sticking with that? Is that still the case? Or might there be some policy implications to his decision not to go to the OSCE?

MS. PSAKI: I am sticking with that. I'm just looking at Lesley here in my -- corner of my eye. I am sticking with that. I don't have any new guidance for you on that front. Assistant Secretary Nuland is still planning to attend and travel there after joining us for the first part of the visit.

QUESTION: On Syria?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Is it --

QUESTION: Can you tell us the -- oh, sorry.

QUESTION: Sorry. Just on this charade -- charade, for Lesley -- of scheduling reasons, is it not the case that not doing -- not going on this trip -- not going to Kyiv is a sign of displeasure?

MS. PSAKI: I will let you do your own reporting, Matt. I don't have any more analysis or comments on it from here.

QUESTION: But there was --

QUESTION: And one more quick one on Ukraine.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Obviously, we're seeing the demonstrations, violent crackdown.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: What's the response from the State Department?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're of course, naturally, closely monitoring the ongoing demonstrations, not only in Kyiv but in cities around Ukraine. As you know, since the demonstrations began on November 21<sup>st</sup>, there have been an increasing number of violent incidents, including against journalists. We stress there is no room, and we continue to stress there is no room for violence in a country that aspires to a democratic future. We continue to call on all sides to maintain calm, and on Ukrainian authorities to ensure that members of the public and the press are able to safely and peacefully exercise their rights of speech and assembly.

As I mentioned a little bit before, we still have -- Assistant Secretary Nuland is still planning to travel there. The Ukrainian foreign ministry announced that the ministerial is proceeding as planned.

QUESTION: But there was --

QUESTION: Are you sure that Ukraine is a country that aspires to a democratic future?

MS. PSAKI: Any country that may aspire, certainly, these are important values to follow through on.

QUESTION: Right. But are you still convinced that Ukraine aspires to a westward-looking, democratic future?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we will see, Matt. Time will tell. Actions speak louder than words.

QUESTION: Do you -- does this --

QUESTION: Do you still stand by the comments made by Ambassador Nuland in her speech to the Atlantic Council a couple of weeks ago and also comments from this podium that it is your belief that Ukraine should be following the path towards joining some kind of association agreement with the EU?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Our view has not changed on that. Obviously, there have been a lot of events that have happened since then, but --

QUESTION: And do you believe that the demonstrations on the streets are actually -- that's what they want? I mean, it seems to be that they're demonstrating because they're angry that the government hasn't taken this path that's been laid out for them.

**MS. PSAKI:** I would point you to the comments of the demonstrators, of which there have been many. I don't want to speak on their behalf, but our position hasn't changed on what steps they could take. Obviously, it's up to Ukraine to take those steps.

**QUESTION:** So – but, I mean, the United States is – if you don't want to give your backing to them – at least sympathetic to what the demonstrators are asking for.

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, the demonstrators are saying a range of things, so I don't – beyond what we've stated publicly many times, I don't have any other further public statements on our position, which has been stated by Assistant Secretary Nuland and by other officials in the past several weeks.

**QUESTION:** Given the estimates of some 300,000 people who were demonstrating across the country on Sunday, and given that they all seem, to a person, to be saying that the government is ignoring their wish to be more closely aligned with Europe, isn't it a bit disingenuous for this building to suggest that they need to show any restraint? They're not the ones who are bludgeoning people with battering rams and turning rubber bullets on the police. It seems they're taking the brunt of everything that's been happening.

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't think I took sides. I think I said that it's important for all sides to maintain calm, that there's no place for violence in a country that aspires to a democratic future. So I don't – I would disagree with the premise of your claims.

**QUESTION:** What does this building think of the prime minister's – call for his security forces to show restraint and seemingly to be missing in action when on Sunday there was more violence heaped upon the demonstrators, particularly in Kyiv?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think I just expressed what our view is of violence against demonstrators, so that's what our view is.

**QUESTION:** Can I – has the Secretary spoken to somebody in Ukraine, his counterpart?

**MS. PSAKI:** He has not in the last several days. I can check if there's been any other calls I'm not aware of.

**QUESTION:** Because one of the big issues for Ukraine is tearing itself away from Russia and looking towards Western Europe for economic support. And one of the big things is that the president of Ukraine is heading to China to look for that. And if – I was wondering if the U.S. had offered them kind of – some kind of assurance or reassurance economically that they could be better off by signing these deals and with the support – and the U.S. would support any kind of reform through the International Monetary Fund.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, aside from public statements we've made, which, as Jo referenced, is – that our belief is that European integration is the surest course to economic growth and strengthening Ukraine's democracy. That's still our belief. That's been consistently our belief. But beyond that, I'm not aware of any other discussions. Obviously, there's a lot of – that's going on with the EU and with Russia, and beyond that we have made our position clear.

**QUESTION:** And what is the building's position on the detention of Yulia Tymoshenko?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we have consistently spoken about this in the past and expressed our concern about her detention. I know this was also a component that was potentially being worked through as an element of Ukraine getting into the EU. So we've consistently expressed concern, encouraged them to take steps forward. Obviously, there hasn't been progress on that on the ground.

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry, what did you say was the surest way to economic growth?

**MS. PSAKI:** I said European integration is the surest course to economic growth and strengthening --

**QUESTION:** Did you give the same advice to the Greeks?

(Laughter.)

**MS. PSAKI:** Matt. Behave.

Do we have any more on Ukraine or Afghanistan, since we touched on that too?

**QUESTION:** Still on Ukraine.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** The Russians have proposed that the EU, Ukraine, and Russia get together to discuss some of these problems. Would the United States be in favor of that, some kind of a trilateral discussion to discuss the economic situation and political differences?

**MS. PSAKI:** It wouldn't involve the United States, so I don't have a particular position. I'm happy to talk to our team and see if we have a view on that.

Ukraine or Afghanistan? Okay, should we move on to Syria? Let's go to Margaret.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Jen, the OPCW said over the past few days that the U.S. has stepped up, that they're going to give operational support, offering up financing. Can you give us some more detail on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. Well, I don't know if it will be satisfying, but let me try. (Laughter.) Well, as you know, the United States is committed to supporting the international community's efforts to destroy Syria's chemical weapons in the safest, most efficient and effective means possible. We have offered and are currently outfitting a U.S. vessel with field-deployable hydrolysis system technology to support the OPCW's efforts. We are in close contact with the OPCW and our international partners and remain confident that we can meet the milestones for destruction set out by the OPCW. Of course, the OPCW remains – and the UN – remain the lead coordinators on reaching out to countries and coordinating steps forward and any timeline, et cetera.

**QUESTION:** But on the financing, what is it exactly that we're offering? Is that a chunk of change? Is that financing and loans, or --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've offered – we've offered in the – prior to this, we have offered – we have given 6 million to the OPCW and the UN Trust Fund, both in financial contributions and in kind, so I think we gave some materials as well. But this, of course, would be a DOD vessel. So I would point you to them on the specific costs. This, at this point, is an offer. So I think that's still being worked through.

**QUESTION:** So – but beyond the vessel, the OPCW says the cost is going to be between 35 to 40 million euros for the private contractors who would actually be --

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** -- be doing the disposal themselves. So is any of that money coming through the State Department, or is the State Department topped out at \$6 million?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've said we'd be open to exploring additional ways to provide assistance. I don't have any announcements today of additional assistance we're planning to provide, but that certainly is something we're in discussions with the OPCW about.

**QUESTION:** So we can understand correctly, it is a commercial vessel, correct, that they are trying --

**MS. PSAKI:** It is a --

**QUESTION:** -- (inaudible) --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- U.S. Government vessel, not a commercial vessel.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. PSAKI:** But there is a part of this – and this may be what you're asking about – which is the OPCW reaching out to commercial companies about the destruction capabilities.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** So what – so DOD is outfitting its own boat, which will be staffed with DOD personnel who will do this?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check on the specifics of that. I think some of it may still be work – be going through the process of being worked out, Matt, because they've offered – but obviously, how it would be staffed and the materials and the money – I mean, all of those are pieces that are still being discussed.

**QUESTION:** Do you actually have a timeline and the location for where this would happen?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have a location. That's still being discussed. The timeline, as you know, is – the next deadline is – not deadline, it's a target – is December 31<sup>st</sup>. And that is to get all of the chemical weapons out. But in terms of when the next step would be, I don't have a timeline of that.

Anne.

**QUESTION:** I realize part of this is kind of DOD-flavored, but you might know the answer.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** So is it proper to call this a warship, or is it a military-owned, but not non-warship ship?

(Laughter.)

**MS. PSAKI:** That is a very specific ship question. I would hesitate to answer incorrectly. I'd have to check on specifically how we categorize it. I don't believe it is a warship, but let me see if we can get more specification on how we – what we call it exactly.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And on the policy side, I mean, is there any disappointment here that after casting about to – for a friend here, it ends up being the U.S. having to essentially do this on its own?

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't categorize it that way. I mean, certainly this is a priority for the U.S., as it is for the international community, to destroy and eliminate the chemical weapons. The OPCW is still talking to countries. There are countries that have made public comments about their willingness to help, so we'll see how that all shakes out. And certainly, we'd welcome the support or contribution of other countries.

**QUESTION:** Well, I'd imagine from your perspective, it should be a shared priority among many nations who would also share the same goal of the ultimate destruction, right? I mean, everybody was waving a flag when that – when the thing was signed.

**MS. PSAKI:** Certainly, and there are countries, as you know, throughout that have been open to contributing that couldn't for a variety of reasons, whether it's regulations or capacity or resources. But they're still talking to countries about contributing and being a part of this, and certainly we're hopeful of that as well.

**QUESTION:** So if the question is: "Are you surprised that you've been left holding the bag on this, once again," --

**MS. PSAKI:** We're not holding the bag yet, Matt.

**QUESTION:** -- the answer would be no, you're not surprised. You expected your friends in Europe to wimp out.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we made clear we were open to contributing from the beginning, Matt. There are other countries that have expressed an openness to contributing in some capacity. They're all going to make their decisions about what that will – what will – that will entail, and we'll let the OPCW decide how all of it will work together.

**QUESTION:** What about Russia, who you made this deal with and has been instrumental, as you say, in helping move this towards a resolution? Why can't Russia contribute in a significant way like you can?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not familiar with what they have contributed or what they've committed to contribute or what they have not. Obviously, there are financial ways – there are a number of ways to contribute. We certainly welcome any country's contribution. There are different ways that each country can do that.

**QUESTION:** Are you in touch with the Russians specifically about making an – a contribution?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not sure. I'd have to check on that and see if it's a discussion that's been a part of the regular discussions with Foreign Minister Lavrov.

**QUESTION:** Jen, still on Syria.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Yesterday, Mike Rogers, the chair of the Intelligence Committee, warned that there are many jihadis that are Americans and Europeans and Westerners and so on, that they go back and forth and so on. Are you concerned about these jihadis being trained in Syria and now they come back to the United States and perhaps organize terrorist acts?

**MS. PSAKI:** I haven't seen his comments specifically. I know – I believe he may have been on a Sunday show yesterday. I haven't read them fully. We've – we're naturally concerned, as you know, about extremists whether they're going in and certainly and if they're coming out. I talked a little bit, I think it was a week or two ago, about ways that we coordinate with our international partners in the region to kind of track this and efforts we undertake to make sure we're watching, but of course we're concerned. I don't have any other specifics for you.

**QUESTION:** Are you pressing your partners in this case, like the Saudis and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, that have been supplying arms and money in the past for these extremist groups – are you pressing them not to do so?

**MS. PSAKI:** We have consistently, and all the countries, as you know, have agreed repeatedly to contribute assistance through the SMC.

**QUESTION:** Finally, yesterday there was a report in the *Telegraph*, *The London Telegraph*, that says basically the Free Syrian Army now is becoming a group of warlords and accumulating money and gangs and so on and have no interest, really, in reaching a settlement. Is that your assessment, or are you still working very closely with General Idris?

**MS. PSAKI:** We are still working very closely with General Idris, we're still working towards a Geneva conference in January, and we still believe there's no military solution, as you know.

More on Syria?

**QUESTION:** Still on Syria.

**MS. PSAKI:** Or – go ahead, Roz.

**QUESTION:** Still on Syria, the Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif did an interview with Al Jazeera this morning. And when it came to Geneva II, he said that while Iran is, quote: not begging to attend the talks in January, it would attend if invited. My first question: Would the U.S. be willing to invite Iran to take part in these talks? And if so, what does the U.S. believe that Iran could bring to this situation to try to end the civil war?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, no decisions have been made about participation yet. There's another trilateral meeting on December 20<sup>th</sup> coming up that we'll be participating in with the UN and the Russians. Our position hasn't changed on Iran's participation or whether we believe they should be invited. They have not endorsed the Geneva communique. That's a condition we feel is necessary, but obviously this will continue to be discussed at the next trilateral meeting.

**QUESTION:** But given the – that the UN is now estimating that upwards of 120-25,000 people may have been killed in the civil war to date --



MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- is there some sort of leverage that Tehran could bring to the table to try to induce the Assad regime to, if nothing else, stop the killing and try to at least put in some sort of ceasefire?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this goes back to the premise that attendees should be endorsing the Geneva communique, because that is what the purpose and the goal of the conference is. So, I don't have any speculation on what leverage they may or may not have, but the conversations we have had with them in recent weeks have been about their nuclear program and moving towards a first-step agreement on that. They've not been focused on Syria. And our position on whether or not they should attend the Geneva conference in January hasn't changed.

QUESTION: But you do feel that if they do endorse Geneva I, there's a great deal of value for Iran's participation --

MS. PSAKI: Well, we'd have to --

QUESTION: -- considering that it is --

MS. PSAKI: We'd have to evaluate it, Said. I don't want to get ahead of --

QUESTION: But it's a very ally of the regime. It supports other elements that help the regime in its fight, like Hezbollah so on.

MS. PSAKI: If that is a step they take, we can have a robust discussion in here about it.

QUESTION: Jen, are there any contacts currently between the United States Government and the Syrian regime? I mean, I know Secretary Kerry spoke months and months ago --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- to Foreign Minister Muallem. Is there anything going on at the moment?

MS. PSAKI: And we have for some time, as you know, have had different channels, but I don't have anything specific for you. I can check if there have been any recent contacts on any level.

QUESTION: So there were reports over the weekend that some European countries are quietly beginning to --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- reopen diplomatic conversations or channels with the Syrian regime because, I think, the fear is that this is just so blocked at the moment that they're --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- it's not going anywhere.

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me see if there have been any contacts at any level of the regime. We've -- they have happened in the past, as you mentioned, so I will see if there's more to report on that.

QUESTION: Can I go back to the Iranians and taking part in Geneva? I mean, I think over the last week or so, when there's been, like, various bouts of violence in Syria, that the Iranian Government has said that there needs to be a political solution to the situation in Syria. So don't you think that Iran is making more positive comments? I mean, I don't think the Russians have gone far beyond saying that there needs to be a political solution. They haven't said anything about President Assad leaving (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: Well, the whole premise -- I mean the whole goal is to create a transitional governing body. That's the goal of a Geneva conference. So, certainly, they haven't embraced that as the focus of the Geneva communique, and --

QUESTION: Well, even though the Russians have agreed to a political transition, your definition of a transition is far different from the -- than the Russians' definition of a transition. So if the Iranians were to say, like, okay, we accept a political transition, I mean, does that really mean that they --

MS. PSAKI: It's not just about a political transition. It's about embracing the Geneva communique, which they have not done. If they do that, we will evaluate whether or not we'd support their -- an invitation to them to attend the conference.

QUESTION: Zarif also told us that his country is not interested in aggravating any sectarian tensions between Shiite and Sunni, between Alawite and other major Islamic communities; that they're trying to, in their efforts, promote more harmony, more peace. Does that add any -- does that change the complexion at all, particularly in Syria?

MS. PSAKI: I don't want to speak too specifically to an interview I haven't yet seen yet, and neither has anyone on our team. Broadly speaking, obviously we took a significant step forward with the first-step agreement on their nuclear program, but there are remaining concerns that we have, as you all are familiar with, whether it's their involvement in support of the regime in Syria or humanitarian issues, and so that has not changed that. I can take a closer look once we see the transcript of the interview and see if we have more comments on Foreign Minister Zarif's comments.

QUESTION: You're saying your team does not watch Al Jazeera?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that is not true; we do. However, I believe there's only been a very short clip that has played of this interview that I'm sure will get lots of attention once it all plays.

QUESTION: Beyond the interview, he's freely reaching out. He visited Kuwait. He's reaching out to the other Gulf countries. He wants to visit Saudi Arabia. I mean, there is an effort underway to alleviate their fears and actually encourage them towards participating in Geneva II to make it a success. You must have some sort of a reading of this effort.

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any particular reading of it for you, Said. Our position, I think, has been pretty clear on whether or not they attend the Geneva conference.

QUESTION: I have another really quick logistics thing. On the December 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, that's Wendy Sherman and that -- it's the same iteration?

MS. PSAKI: It is that level. Exactly, yes. Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Is that new or was that announced last week or something --

MS. PSAKI: I believe we talked about it last week as being the next meeting.

QUESTION: On China -- (inaudible).

QUESTION: Please, Jen, can we stay on Iran, please?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Let's stay on Iran and then we can go to China.

QUESTION: On the 6<sup>th</sup> of February in this room, I had a very brief exchange with your predecessor, Victoria Nuland --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- about Iran. And with your indulgence, I will read it in its entirety for the purpose of the record and so you can respond to it.

*"Rosen: There have been reports that intermittently, and outside of the formal P5+1 mechanisms, the Obama Administration, or members of it, have conducted direct secret bilateral talks with Iran. Is that true or false?"*

*"Nuland: We have made clear, as the Vice President did at Munich, that in the context of the larger P5+1 framework, we would be prepared to talk to Iran bilaterally. But with regard to the kind of thing that you're talking about on a government-to-government level, no."*

That's the entirety of the exchange.

As we now know, senior state department officials had, in fact, been conducting direct, secret bilateral talks with senior officials of the Iranian Government in Oman, perhaps dating back to 2011 by that point.

So the question today is a simple one: When the briefer was asked about those talks and flatly denied them from the podium, that was untrue, correct?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, James, I -- that -- you're talking about a February briefing, so 10 months ago. I don't think we've outlined or confirmed contacts or specifics beyond a March meeting. I'm not going to confirm others beyond that at this point. So I don't know that I have any more for you.

QUESTION: Do you stand by the accuracy of what Ms. Nuland told me, that there had been no government-to-government contacts, no secret direct bilateral talks with Iran as of the date of that briefing, February 6<sup>th</sup>? Do you stand by the accuracy of that?

MS. PSAKI: James, I have no new information for you today on the timing of when there were any discussions with any Iranian officials.

QUESTION: Let me try it one last way, Jen --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: -- and I appreciate your indulgence.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: Is it the policy of the State Department, where the preservation or the secrecy of secret negotiations is concerned, to lie in order to achieve that goal?

MS. PSAKI: James, I think there are times where diplomacy needs privacy in order to progress. This is a good example of that. Obviously, we have made clear and laid out a number of details in recent weeks about discussions and about a bilateral channel that fed into the P5+1 negotiations, and we've answered questions on it, we've confirmed details. We're happy to continue to do that, but clearly, this was an important component leading up to the agreement that was reached a week ago.

QUESTION: Since you, standing at that podium last week, did confirm that there were such talks, at least as far back as March of this year, I don't see what would prohibit you from addressing directly this question: Were there secret direct bilateral talks between the United States and Iranian officials in 2011?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more for you today. We've long had ways to speak with the Iranians through a range of channels, some of which you talked – you mentioned, but I don't have any other specifics for you today.

QUESTION: One more on Iran?

QUESTION: The Los Angeles Times and Politico have reported that those talks were held as far back as 2011. Were those reports inaccurate?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not sure which reports you're talking about. Are you talking about visits that the Secretary and others made to Oman, or are you talking about other reports?

QUESTION: I'm talking about U.S. officials meeting directly and secretly with Iranian officials in Oman as far back as 2011. The Los Angeles Times and Politico have reported those meetings. Were those reports inaccurate?

MS. PSAKI: I have nothing more for you on it, James, today.

QUESTION: One more on Iran?

MS. PSAKI: On Iran? Let's just finish Iran and then we can go to China. Go ahead, Roz.

QUESTION: One of – one more on Iran. Foreign Minister Zarif said, directly contradicting the Obama Administration's contention that sanctions worked, he told our interviewer that when the sanctions were first imposed, Iran had 200 working centrifuges. Today, they have more than 19,000. What is this building's reaction to his comment that sanctions did not work and did not bring Iran to the negotiating table?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I would like to look more closely at the context of the comments. But, just as reminder, President Rouhani and others have talked about how the impact – how growing the economy and putting an end – doing – bringing an end to the sanctions is something that was a priority for them in order to help the economy and the Iranian people. There's no question, if you look just at the facts of the impact of oil revenues, the impact on their economic growth writ large that there was a huge impact of – that there – the sanctions had an enormous impact, and that that was a driving factor in bringing the Iranians back to the negotiating table.

In terms of progress made on their efforts to develop a nuclear weapon, whether through centrifuges or at their various facilities, that to me sounds like a separate question. Obviously, there was concerns about steps they were taking and progress they were making, which was why it was so important to come to an acceptable agreement that would halt and roll back the progress of their program.

QUESTION: Just to follow up on that, though –

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: – Secretary Kerry, when he did his round robin of interviews after the announcement of the deal in Geneva, more than once stated that when Iran had reached out to the Bush-Cheney Administration in 2003, Iran was only in possession of 164 centrifuges. Now, he would go on to say, they have 19,000, and this therefore represents the best possible deal that could be secured.

Isn't it a fact that since the Obama-Biden Administration took office, 70 percent of Iran's centrifuges have been installed?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'd have to look at the statistics, James, but we have not questioned the fact that Iran has made progress on enrichment and on developing a nuclear weapon. We have not questioned that. That's one of the reasons why we stepped up sanctions over the past couple of years. The President and Secretary Kerry were big proponents of that. We worked with the international community to do just that to put that necessary pressure in place.

The point I was trying to make to Roz is that – what she's asking sounds to me like two separate questions, so that was –

QUESTION: Right. I'm pursuing the separate one part that she carved out, and that is to say – and if this is untrue, I'd be grateful to be disabused of the notion – but the great bulk of Iran's progress in the development of its enrichment program has taken place under President Obama's watch, correct?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check on the specific numbers. The –

QUESTION: You're not prepared to dispute that statement, as –

MS. PSAKI: Well, James, I think what we're focused on at this point is the fact that we're now at a point where we are halting and rolling back the progress of their program and we're working towards a comprehensive agreement to bring an end to it. I can't speculate for you what would happen without – what would have happened without sanctions. I would venture to guess –

QUESTION: (Inaudible) sanctions.

MS. PSAKI: But they were being paired together, so that's why I'm bringing it into the conversation.

**QUESTION:** But the context of the question was exactly: "The Obama Administration says we showed up because our economy is falling apart. I'm here to tell you that's not the case. We have our own reasons for coming."

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we will take a close look at his comments and we'll have more to say about them once we do.

**QUESTION:** Can I just go back to the Geneva meeting and --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- December 20<sup>th</sup> with Wendy Sherman?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** This is --

**MS. PSAKI:** It's that level -- in terms of specific attendance, I'll have to just double-check that for you.

**QUESTION:** Oh, okay.

**MS. PSAKI:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** This is going to be the first of the political meetings towards the next -- the comprehensive agreement --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, they also --

**QUESTION:** -- or this is the technical discussions?

**MS. PSAKI:** No, no, no.

**QUESTION:** No, this is Syria.

**MS. PSAKI:** This is -- sorry, this is Syria.

**QUESTION:** Oh, I'm sorry.

**MS. PSAKI:** This is Syria.

**QUESTION:** Excuse me. I'm sorry.

**MS. PSAKI:** So this is the pre-Geneva. No, it's okay. It's confusing. Lots of Genevas.

**QUESTION:** Okay. But I did have an Iran question, actually.

**QUESTION:** But is there any new -- I mean --

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** -- when is it that you're going to start to negotiate the comprehensive deal with Iran?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, right now, what we're focused on is the technical discussions leading up to the start of the six-month --

**QUESTION:** Right.

**QUESTION:** So do you have a date for those?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't yet have a date on those.

**QUESTION:** Or a place?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't yet have a place. It's being worked through. Hopefully we'll have an update for you all in the coming days.

**QUESTION:** And can I ask -- I don't know if you had seen the reports that the new British envoy to Iran is actually going to visit Tehran tomorrow. I wondered what the --

**MS. PSAKI:** I haven't seen that.

**QUESTION:** Well, I wanted a U.S. reaction to this following on to the question I asked last week about how far along the line you are prepared to go with your new diplomatic relations or not with Iran.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. I still don't have any prediction of any step beyond what step we've already taken, which is being a part of the P5+1 agreement on the first step here with Iran. Obviously, different countries are going to make their own decisions, and as with most issues, we certainly support that.

**QUESTION:** Would it be helpful, though? Do you believe it's helpful that the British envoy could be going to Tehran?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't know that I have that level of analysis on it. I don't have all the details on what the purpose of the trip is or what they hope to accomplish. And obviously, every country will make their own decisions about diplomatic relationships.

**QUESTION:** Jen, one more on the --

**QUESTION:** East China Sea?

**QUESTION:** -- secret negotiations with Iran.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** I apologize if you've already addressed this, but there have been reports that the secret negotiations that the U.S. was engaging in with Iran created a feeling of resentment among P5+1 allies such as France, and then that contributed to a rift among the P5+1 and made it difficult to reach consensus within that group. Do you have a reaction to that or a comment on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't want to speak to anonymous reports about what may or may not be the feelings by other countries, but I will reiterate for you that this was – these discussions were fed into the P5+1 process. That is the process that we ultimately all worked through to achieve a first-step agreement here. The P5+1 members, as well as our friends in Israel, were briefed early this fall.

As to the discussions, we have always been clear we've been open to bilateral discussions with Iran; that there are a range of channels to do that through; that if anything got serious, that we would certainly be briefing our important partners on that; and that's exactly what we did in this case.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**QUESTION:** And when did the talks begin?

**MS. PSAKI:** James, you're so tricky over there. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Can I ask about China?

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me just say one thing, though, for James. It's important here too – and then I promise we'll go to China – it's important here also to note, though, that these really picked up after President Rouhani's election, that in terms of the discussion of specific pieces about how to move forward, what kind of – what an agreement could look like, that's when it picked up. So I understand that's not answering your question, but I felt it was important to --

**QUESTION:** But just on the basis of methodology and removing the specifics of Iran and who's president or who's Secretary of State, if you were able to stand there at the podium last week and say, "Yes, I'm confirming a certain set of talks that occurred in March," explain to me what is it that prohibits you from saying, yes or no, that a certain set of talks occurred two years ago?

**MS. PSAKI:** If I have more details for you, James, I will – happy to share them.

**QUESTION:** I didn't ask you – I'm asking for your thinking about why you're not addressing the question, not the specifics of the meetings. What is it that prohibits you from addressing a question about meetings that are two years old?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to do a psychiatrist chair today.

Go ahead. On China?

**QUESTION:** What about the couch? (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Thank you, Jen. So as we know, the U.S. Government has already told U.S. carriers to comply with China's requirements before any flights pass through the new air defense zone established by the Chinese Government. So does that mean the U.S. Government has recognized this new air defense zone established by the Chinese Government?

**MS. PSAKI:** So let me be absolutely as clear as I can be here because I know there's been a range of reporting. It has been – some of it has been inaccurate, to no fault of – perhaps it's our fault for not explaining it well enough. So we are not – the State Department is not the point of contact with airlines. The FAA is the point of contact with airlines. There has not been any information that has been put out or confirmed that I am aware of that has conveyed what has or has not been communicated in that capacity to airlines.

There is – for safety and security of passengers, U.S. carriers operate internationally – operate consistently as a process with the notices to airmen issued by foreign countries, as is the case in this case. Their concerns are about the safety and security of passengers. That is different from what the U.S. Government policy is. It is not – this in no way indicates U.S. Government acceptance of China's requirements in the newly declared ADIZ and has absolutely no bearing on the firm and consistent U.S. Government position that we do not accept the legitimacy of China's requirements.

This is a case where China announced this in an uncoordinated fashion. It's inconsistent with standard practice. And their requirements for operating exceed internationally accepted practice in this capacity. So I don't know how much more clear that it is, but it does contradict a bit your question, so I wanted --

**QUESTION:** It looks like we received the statement or the Q&A from the State Department, so it looks like it's from the U.S. Government. And also, you are saying --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, in that statement, which I certainly was well aware of, what was conveyed in there is that for safety and – for the safety and security of passengers, U.S. carriers operate consistently internationally with the notices to airmen issued by foreign governments. It did not convey that – anything specific about what had been communicated to airlines. It did not convey that the U.S. Government supported this effort. So I'm very familiar with the statement you're referring to, and there were a lot of – there were some assumptions made.

**QUESTION:** So (inaudible) --

**QUESTION:** Okay. It looks like --

**QUESTION:** -- that the FAA did not instruct airlines to comply with the Chinese regulations?

MS. PSAKI: I would point you to the FAA for what they did or did not communicate to commercial airlines.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, the FAA is part of the U.S. Government, is it not?

MS. PSAKI: They are. They --

QUESTION: Yes.

MS. PSAKI: Certainly, they are not housed in the State Department, however. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: So -- I understand that, but the State Department does have a representative -- you're familiar with the ICAO?

MS. PSAKI: I am not.

QUESTION: Okay. It's in Montreal.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: It's a good excuse to get to Montreal --

MS. PSAKI: Good.

QUESTION: -- if you ever want to go up there.

MS. PSAKI: I will take that advice.

QUESTION: It's the International Civilian -- it's the civilian airline -- the UN agency for airlines. Do you know if the United States is going to use its membership in the ICAO to oppose this Chinese decision?

MS. PSAKI: I don't.

QUESTION: And if you don't know, could you ask?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, I'm happy to check on that for you, Matt. Absolutely.

QUESTION: And when you say that the U.S. Government does not accept the legitimacy of the Chinese requirements --

MS. PSAKI: Well, it doesn't accept -- yeah, the Chinese requirements, right.

QUESTION: Right. That's what you said.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Doesn't that -- if the FAA has been telling airlines that they have to comply with this, or that they should comply with it, how is that not accepting -- the government accepting the legitimacy?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there's a whole field of regulations and regulatory policy that I am certainly far from an aviation expert, as it evidenced by your Montreal question. So I would point you to them on that.

Evidence of the fact that the U.S. Government does not accept China's requirement is by the fact that the announcement will not change how the United States conducts military operations in the region, which is something DOD announced last week. And that is certainly a U.S. Government decision to make.

QUESTION: So does that mean that U.S. Government planes will not obey the -- or will not follow the Chinese requirements if they're flying through this airspace?

MS. PSAKI: Military planes?

QUESTION: Say the Secretary of State flying on an Air Force plane to Seoul or to Tokyo will not notify the --

MS. PSAKI: I am not aware of any upcoming Seoul trip coming up.

QUESTION: Well, the Vice President is there right now, or in Tokyo, at least. Are you saying that his plane, an Air Force plane, will not follow the requirements of the Chinese?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I am saying military planes would not, and that level of specificity I'd certainly have to check and see where that falls in.

QUESTION: What is this episode -- what impact is this episode having on U.S.-Sino relations?

MS. PSAKI: There are times when we agree and there are times when we disagree, as you know. We've made clear our concerns about not only what was announced but how this was announced, the fact that there was no prior notice. As you also know, Vice President Biden is in the region now on a prior planned trip. He will, of course, be meeting with key leaders to discuss a range of issues. Certainly, this could be a topic of discussion, but there are a number of other issues that we discuss both with China and other partners in the region.

QUESTION: And has the pivot to Asia worked? Is this evidence of the pivot working?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't categorize this into -- I wouldn't put this in the evaluation category of whether or not it worked. Our pivot to Asia, or rebalance to Asia, means focusing on Asia and the important partnership we have with Asia, with countries in the region, the economic and strategic partners. And nothing is further evidence of that than the Vice President's trip there, the fact that, as you know, the Secretary will be going back to Asia soon, that he was just there a couple of months ago with Secretary Hagel. So that is evidence of our commitment to the region. And we work with them on a -- countries in the region on a broad range of issues.

**QUESTION:** But as we survey the last five years of this Administration, would you say that China is less aggressive in its serial commission of human rights abuses, currency manipulation, cyber warfare against U.S. businesses and government, territorial aggression, or is it better than it used to be?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to do an evaluation of that. Obviously, we work with them on economic issues, we work with them on strategic issues. There are still issues, including human rights, including this issue we're talking about now, that we express concerns about when warranted, and we'll continue to do that. But we know that the relationship is a vital one and one that we need to keep plugging away at even when we disagree.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could I (inaudible) for a second?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Is it fair to characterize the U.S. position as being that aside from the official policy, for the purposes of safety and avoiding some kind of unfortunate incident, that commercial carriers should abide by the Chinese ADIZ requirements?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have -- I'd point you again to the FAA on more specifics than what I just conveyed. There are a range of regulations and policies that, of course, they oversee or are in place, but our general position as a U.S. Government is that we don't accept China's requirements. And obviously, the military -- actions of military exercises is evidence of that.

**QUESTION:** Jen, this comes from --

**QUESTION:** Sorry, sorry. Just a quick follow-up on that.

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** It looks like the two main U.S. airlines are complying with -- are taking steps to comply. Delta and United are the two that have flight routes through the area, which seems to have kind of created a little bit of confusion/consternation in Japan over a perceived rift with Japanese policy, which is to not allow U.S. commercial airliners to file their flight plans with China. Do you have a -- do you have any kind of reassurance or any kind of response to that?

**MS. PSAKI:** We coordinate closely with Japan and with South Korea and all of the countries in the region about a range of issues. And certainly on this issue, we have been in touch with Japan and will continue to be. This is -- for specific actions of individual commercial airliners, I would point you to them or the FAA on any regulations.

**QUESTION:** But -- so you're not -- but you're not afraid for the safety or concerned about the safety of U.S. citizens on flights that are flying through the area?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, certainly safety and security of citizens should be of concern to everyone. Obviously, there are policies in place and regulations in place because of that. But we don't oversee airline regulations. The FAA does, so I would point you to them.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.) Did the United States Government -- the position has changed toward this ADIZ, or not changed? What is the position to ADIZ now?

**MS. PSAKI:** It has not changed. We -- China announced the ADIZ without prior consultations even though the newly-announced ADIZ overlaps with parts of longstanding ADIZs of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Taiwan, and includes territory administered by Japan. As I mentioned, we -- the fact that China's announcement has caused confusion and increased the risk of accidents only further underscores the validity of concerns and the need for China to rescind the procedures. It's consistently been our position and one we have communicated both publicly and privately. I know there was some confusion over the weekend about airlines and specifically.

**QUESTION:** Jen, you said that you are not still -- not accepting China's new air defense zone. But I wonder, like, Japan has its own air defense zone, and also part of it covers Taiwan. But it looks like the U.S. doesn't say anything about it. So do you think there is sort of a double standard? Why do you react so strongly to China's air defense zone?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, one of the reasons is that they announced this without prior consultations. It was inconsistent with longstanding procedure and process. And obviously, it overlaps with a number of other longstanding air defense zones of some other neighboring countries.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**QUESTION:** Jen, you do not contest the ability of China to declare such a identification zone; it's just the manner in which they did it, or the extent?

**MS. PSAKI:** No. I think I have -- I've just consistently said that we believe they should rescind the procedures. I've just -- I've also stated a couple of times that we don't accept China's requirements. So I think I've made that pretty clear.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**QUESTION:** Is the first --

**QUESTION:** In response to the -- China's declaration of its own ADIZ, the South Korean Government is poised to expand its own ADIZ, so-called KADIZ, to the South China Sea. What is the position of the United States? Would you encourage it or discourage it?

**MS. PSAKI:** I haven't seen those reports, or I don't even know if they're reports or if there's been an announcement. I haven't seen any announcement, I guess I should say. So let me check into that, and --

**QUESTION:** They say they have already started consultations with the United States.

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check into it and see if we have more to say on that.

**QUESTION:** Is this the first time the U.S. has called --

**QUESTION:** Jennifer, you talk about safety --

**QUESTION:** -- for the zone to be rescinded?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check on that for you, Roz.

**QUESTION:** Can we change topic?

**QUESTION:** No.

**QUESTION:** You talk about safety. Are you really concerned that the Chinese may down an airliner or something?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not predicting that, but certainly there is -- they created these Air Defense Identification Zones, they've asked for prior flight plans. So of course, the security and safety is part of the regulatory process, and -- but I don't have any predictions. It's just the question of abiding by it.

**QUESTION:** Is it a real concern, downing an airliner?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't think I have any more for you on that question.

**QUESTION:** Jen, when you're taking that question that Roz had --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- could you also check whether the United States actually is directly asking the Chinese to rescind it?

**MS. PSAKI:** Happy to. Sure.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Well, at least --

**QUESTION:** Apart from the specific concerns about how this was announced without any prior notice, its excessiveness, at least in terms of other regulations, and the safety risks that you say it cause, do you have any -- are there broader concerns about this area being identified as essentially the entire East China Sea? Is the U.S. concerned that the Chinese are looking at anything on a map that has the word "China" in it as all their own?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, part of the concern is certainly that it overlaps with parts of other --

**QUESTION:** Right. But in terms of territorial claims --

**MS. PSAKI:** As well as territory administered by Japan, sure.

**QUESTION:** Right, right. But in terms of China's territorial claims, are you concerned that this is the first step or could be a first step towards actually moving in some kind of forceful way to take control of areas of territory and ocean maritime space that it says that it owns?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I don't want to make a prediction of that.

**QUESTION:** No, but I'm asking if you were concerned --

**MS. PSAKI:** But --

**QUESTION:** -- that this is a step in that direction, apart from the specific problems with the no prior notice and all that other -- the safety concerns.

**MS. PSAKI:** But one of the specific problems is also that this includes area -- territory administered by Japan, it includes overlapping area with other countries in the region. So certainly, that does touch on what your question is here. In terms of a prediction of what it will mean in the future, I certainly wouldn't venture to make that at this point.

**QUESTION:** Right. Well, the Chinese say that they would be well within their rights also to declare one of these zones over the entire -- over the South China Sea. Are you concerned about the possibility of that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, you're familiar with what our position is on that, and we've long --

**QUESTION:** Well, that's over the territorial disputes over the -- it's a question of sovereignty for these little atolls and bits of rock.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Would you be as opposed as you are to this if the Chinese did it for the South China Sea, or is that a hypothetical question that you will wait to bash the Chinese over the head for once they -- if and when they do it?

**MS. PSAKI:** It is a hypothetical question at this stage in time.



QUESTION: All right.

QUESTION: One more thing. Just one more thing on that. China at the same time has announced they sent a fighter jet against United States and Japanese aircraft last week. Did you comment on that?

MS. PSAKI: I am not familiar with that specific report. In -- where, exactly?

QUESTION: If it's true, are you concerned about these Chinese announcement?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to look at the specific report, and that may be a DOD question. James.

QUESTION: Given that China makes this declaration --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- and we regard it as thoroughly problematic, if not illegal, and therefore we have on our hands a dispute with the Chinese --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- which is to be adjudicated somehow in a nonviolent way, wasn't it a kind of a provocative act for the United States to fly B-52s through that very zone in a short time thereafter?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would point you to DOD on that, but I would reiterate the fact that we have made clear that this action, this announcement, is not going to change our military exercises. And that is an example of that.

QUESTION: So other than taking -- other than the Vice President, are you aware -- or has there been at this point any conversations that you're aware of in this -- from this building with the Chinese directly? It's kind of on Jill's question. And if not, do you expect them or is this going to be left up to the Vice President when he goes to --

MS. PSAKI: Let me check. I know we have expressed concerns. I mentioned this last week, Matt, so let me just make sure you have it.

QUESTION: Jen, the -- Secretary Kerry did meet on Wednesday with a senior Chinese official?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to --

QUESTION: On Wednesday, the vice premier.

QUESTION: Lu.

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to look back at that. It seems like a long time ago.

QUESTION: I know it does. And it was happening on Wednesday.

MS. PSAKI: Deputy Secretary Burns met last week with a Chinese official where this was a topic of discussion. Also, Assistant Secretary Russel spoke with the ambassador about a week ago, and Ambassador Locke has also been in touch, of course, on the ground. In terms of specific contacts over the last couple of days, I'm happy to check and see what else we can read out for all of you.

QUESTION: Are you taking this to the UN in any forum there?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any prediction of that, James, at this point in time.

QUESTION: New topic?

QUESTION: So it's strictly a bilateral or a multilateral thing, but outside the auspices of the UN is how you're going to seek to resolve it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't have anything for you on it at this point. We're taking this day by day. I conveyed for you what we've done and what we've communicated. But obviously, we're taking steps day by day.

QUESTION: But is that a kind of -- is that a consideration?

MS. PSAKI: Not that I'm aware of, Elise. But obviously, we're taking this day by day.

QUESTION: Can we change --

QUESTION: New subject?

MS. PSAKI: Sure, Jill. Go ahead.

QUESTION: I'm still on China. Can you actually clarify this? China's argument is that we institute the ADIZ that other countries have already instituted. If you're saying that China does not have a right to do that, they can say, well, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. And it doesn't seem like you have a legal foot to stand on. If you're opposed to the way in which they did it or the extent of it, these can be a subject of debate. And China has said we can get rid of our ADIZ if the Japanese get rid of theirs. I mean, something like that could happen. But somehow -- are you really saying that you do not accept -- you do not give China the right to declare a defense identification zone?

MS. PSAKI: I think I've thoroughly outlined what our concerns are, so I'm not sure I have much more to add to your question.

QUESTION: Just on another topic, Jen – sorry.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we were going to go to Jill next, and then I'm happy to go to you.

QUESTION: North Korea?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: Merrill Newman.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: You've seen probably, or read at least, his so-called confession. Do you have any comments about that, any reaction? And what is the latest on his status?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the latest is – and let me do this first and then I'll do the second part. On November 30<sup>th</sup>, North Korea permitted the Embassy of Sweden, our protecting power, to consular access to Merrill Newman. It – and given his advanced age and health conditions, we continue to urge North Korea to release him so he may return home and reunite with his family.

We, of course, have seen the Korean Central News Agency report regarding Mr. Newman's detention. According to the report, he apologized for the misunderstanding that led him – led to his detention. We don't have any other further information regarding the reason for his detention. But again, given his age and health, we continue to call for North Korea to release him as quickly as possible.

QUESTION: Do you believe that the North Korean – that that apology was – that he wrote and that was released by the North Koreans – do you believe that he wrote that of his own volition and that he – and do you have reason to believe that all of those things in that apology are true?

MS. PSAKI: We just don't have any other further analysis. We've seen the same reports all of you have seen, of course, about his interview and the publication of that, but I don't have any other further analysis on it.

QUESTION: Are you aware if that – the subject of his quote, unquote "confession" came up in the meeting with the Swedes?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more on it, but I'm happy to check and see if there's more detail we can outline for all of you.

QUESTION: Did the Swedes as for and did Mr. Newman sign a PAW?

MS. PSAKI: A Privacy Act waiver?

QUESTION: Correct.

MS. PSAKI: Yes, he did. That is why I am able to talk about him now.

QUESTION: Okay. So then if – since he has signed the waiver, would you take it back to your – whoever it is that liaises with the Swedes on this --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: I assume it's EAP, but I guess it could also be EUR – and find out if Mr. Newman, in his discussions with the Swedes, talked at all about or said that he had freely made this alleged confession and when it was that he recorded this or when it --

MS. PSAKI: I am happy to take that and see if there's more we can share.

Go ahead, Lesley.

QUESTION: Also, did the Swedes report back in what condition he is in? Has he been tortured? Anything today? And how long did they meet with him, and was it in a jail? Was it in a --

QUESTION: Guest house.

QUESTION: -- government – a guest house?

QUESTION: A jailhouse guest house.

MS. PSAKI: A guest house. I don't have many specifics on that. I'm happy to also check with Matt's questions and to see if there's more we can share on that as well.

QUESTION: But didn't it include a --

QUESTION: But they did say – the Swedes did say that he --

QUESTION: -- physical examination of him?

QUESTION: The Swedes did, I think, say that he was --

MS. PSAKI: I believe they've spoken publicly about it.

QUESTION: -- that he was treated – that's he's being treated (inaudible), right?

MS. PSAKI: Right. I've seen those comments as well. So I don't have any other specifics on it, but if there's more we share beyond what they've said publicly, I'm happy --

**QUESTION:** Including whether or not there was a physical examination of him during this consular access?

**QUESTION:** I just want to get back to his confession. I mean, it is kind of written in language that kind of fits the narrative that North Korea has been saying, and I'm just wondering if you think that he wrote this. Are you -- I mean, there's often times that you would say, like, oh this person seemed under duress --

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** -- or something like that. So I mean, I'm just -- about this particular confession, do you have any reason to believe that he did not confess to all of those things?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't -- I certainly understand why you're asking. I don't have any particular analysis on it at this stage. I will see if this is something that our team is looking into, and if there's more we can say about it specifically.

**QUESTION:** And what is this building doing to secure his release beyond calling for his release from imprisonment? I mean, Ambassador King had tried months ago to go --

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** -- for the other American under detention, Kenneth Bae. What's actually being done to get them out?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, our Swedish protecting power just visited with him two days ago, and obviously that's an important component of reaching out to citizens who are detained in North Korea. We certainly do continue to call for his release. I don't have any other predictions or announcements on travel or visits of other officials at this point to tell you about.

**QUESTION:** But beyond those consular visits, I mean, is there any outreach to the Chinese specially on behalf of Mr. Newman?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have more I can outline for all of you, but I can check and see if there is any more to tell.

**QUESTION:** Have they been helpful the past with Kenneth Bae or with others? The Chinese (Inaudible)?

**MS. PSAKI:** They have been helpful, but there's not more specifics I can outline.

**QUESTION:** Through the Swedes are elsewhere, has North Korea communicated any demands or requests of the United States that have to do with Newman or -- as a prelude to his possible release?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any more specifics on the contact with the Swedes and kind of what the discussion entailed beyond confirming --

**QUESTION:** Well, any -- in any forum, have they asked for anything from the United States?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any details on it. I am happy to check if there's any more to share with all of you.

**QUESTION:** But you guys are in touch with the North Koreans directly, just to confirm?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we -- as you know, we've long had a channel, but we've been working in this case through our Swedish protective -- protecting power.

**QUESTION:** But you have been in touch with the North Koreans specifically on his matter?

**MS. PSAKI:** On this specific case, not that I'm aware of, but I'm happy to check if there's anything more on that.

**QUESTION:** Are you in touch with Mr. Newman's family?

**MS. PSAKI:** We are. We have been. Let me see if I have the detail of when we last spoke with him -- with his family. I don't have that detail for you. I'm happy to put that in the pocket of things I'm going to check on.

**QUESTION:** And have they asked for you to help facilitate any kind of visit by them to North Korea, given that this gentleman's actually -- I mean, he's quite elderly --

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** -- so you would imagine that if -- there would be concern enough to try and travel to visit him.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. I'm not aware of a request that they've made about that specifically, but we can see.

**QUESTION:** So all the attention, really, is on this Mr. Newman. But as we've said, Kenneth Bae has been held for quite a long time.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. You're right.

**QUESTION:** So in your efforts working with the Swedes or working to try and get the release, I mean, are you emphasizing because of Mr. Newman's age and health that you need to get him out right away, or are they part of a package that you think that they --

**MS. PSAKI:** I mean, we'd certainly like to see them both released as quickly as possible. In terms of that level of detail, I just don't have that.

**QUESTION:** These American citizens being held against their will in a rogue state, they're hostages, right?

**MS. PSAKI:** I mean, they're being held by the governments. The governments have confirmed that, so I don't know that I need to categorize it further, James.

**QUESTION:** You don't regard them as hostages?

MS. PSAKI: Do we have another topic?

QUESTION: Yes. Could I move onto the --

QUESTION: (Off-mike.) (Laughter.)

QUESTION: -- the Secretary's trip.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Okay. The portion to the West Bank and to Israel.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: Yes. If you have more to share with us -- today or yesterday, President Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority, was so impressed with the Geneva success, now he's suggesting a format, perhaps another Geneva, where the Palestinian-Israeli issue could be resolved. Would you look kindly at this suggestion?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I haven't seen those comments from him specifically. I know this has been an idea floated out there. Our focus remains on the direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. We're a facilitator in that effort. There are certainly a number of countries who have a great investment and great interest in the success -- in a successful outcome here, including the Arab League, including many other countries that want to contribute to growing the Palestinian economy. But that's our focus, not on planning yet another conference.

QUESTION: And a Palestinian member of the Israeli Knesset, Mr. Ahmed Tibi, claims that the 20,000 housing that the Israelis announced and they put on hold were actually not put on hold, that there is -- construction is ongoing. Do you have any information on that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything new on that. I'd have to look into that for you.

Scott?

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: Oh.

QUESTION: Can we stay on stay on that?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: Just on this idea of not necessarily a Geneva-type conference for the peace process, but just the idea of internationalizing the process, would the United States -- would the Administration object to an internationalization of the peace process?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's hard to know exactly what that means. Obviously, as you all are well aware, there's direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians now. That's what our focus is on, so certainly that's not a path we're pursuing.

QUESTION: Well, I think that the point that -- right, it's not a path that you're pursuing --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- but the point that people who are suggesting that this might be a way to go, the point that they make is that the United States has been the sole and unique arbiter, mediator, facilitator, whatever you want to call it, of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks going back decades.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And you haven't gotten anything out of it. There's been no success. It's been one failure after another. Is it perhaps not time to try something new, is the argument that these people would make.

MS. PSAKI: Well, Matt, obviously, many people are going to make different arguments about how it should proceed. We're less than halfway through the nine-month timeline here. There are a number of countries that are engaged and invested, including, of course, the Arab League, who, as you know, are in very close contact with the Palestinians and engaged in this effort. There are many who are engaged with the Israelis in this effort. So our focus remains on the direct negotiations, and I don't think we're at this point speculating on a different alternative forum.

QUESTION: Well, let me -- okay. Well, let me put it this way: Is it still the position of the Administration that the United States has unique leverage and influence with both sides that makes it the only logical or capable, competent, credible mediator for peace between Israel and the Palestinians?

MS. PSAKI: I don't know that we've ever stated it exactly like that. We're playing a facilitator role which both sides are comfortable with. There are other countries engaged with this effort and certainly in touch with the Israelis and the Palestinians. I expect that will continue. But in the meantime, we'll continue to play the facilitator role as long as it's productive.

**QUESTION:** Do you believe, does the Administration believe that the United States still has leverage and influence with Israel or the Palestinians? I mean, you say, in reference to other questions about, say, Mr. Newman or Mr. Bae in North Korea --

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** -- that the Chinese have influence with the North Koreans and you would like to go through them, maybe after you're done yelling at them about their air defense zone. But do you still think that the United States -- does the Administration believe that it has influence and leverage with either Israel or the Palestinians?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think we have a close relationship with both. And obviously, we're at this point because both sides decided to come to the table. I don't think it's about leverage. There's -- it's in the interest of both sides to come to an agreement on the final status issues, and that's what they're working to do at this point.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could I just ask -- there was an agreement --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- reached last week between the EU and Israel which will allow Israel to actually touch some funding for scientific research. There have been some problems, because the EU wanted to bar all research in areas of -- in the West Bank --

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** -- settlement areas in the West Bank. Is there an -- I mean, does the American -- do America -- does America believe that this is a good agreement for the EU and Israel, given that Secretary Kerry has always mentioned that he fears an increasing isolation of Israel on the international stage?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. I haven't talked to our team about it, so I'd have to talk to them and see if we have any particular view on the agreement last week.

**QUESTION:** And is -- what is the message that Secretary Kerry's going to be bringing with him when he visits Israel later on this week?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think he'll be talking to both sides about the importance of staying firm with the timeline and working through the tough and difficult issues that they're doing at the negotiating table, and reiterating the importance of coming to a peaceful end to the final negotiations. And of course, when he's meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu, they'll certainly be discussing the recent P5+1 agreement with Iran and having an ongoing dialogue about that as well.

**QUESTION:** And have there been any meetings, direct talks between the Israelis and Palestinians, since the resignation of the Palestinian team?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any updates on meetings at this point. I'll see if there's any more we want to provide to all of you in terms of specific meetings and timing of that.

**QUESTION:** But I mean, since the last time the Secretary's been there, there's been another announcement of new settlement construction.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** There's been the resignation of the Palestinian -- it just seems that without him actually physically there holding their hand for hours at a time, that they're not able to sustain it on their own.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, they've had many meetings when he has not been there. So obviously, we didn't expect this to be easy. We certainly are aware of some bumps in the road of late, but both sides have also reaffirmed their commitment to seeing this through.

**QUESTION:** Would you really call those bumps in the road, though? I mean, particularly on the -- actually, on either side, whether it's the Israelis continuing to announce settlement construction or the Palestinians' full negotiating team just giving up, it just doesn't seem as if --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, when the negotiating -- and that's a good example. The negotiating team -- President Abbas reaffirmed his own commitment to seeing this through --

**QUESTION:** But it just --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- whether it was them or whether it was other officials in their place. So they're continuing to move forward.

**QUESTION:** It just doesn't seem like they have the -- while they may have the desire and the dream that there'll be a peace deal. The motivation to actually do the hard work day in and day out doesn't seem to be there. And so it does seem as if Secretary Kerry is the one holding this together personally, and isn't there, like, a limit to how much he can do?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. That's why he has a team to help work through it every day.

**QUESTION:** Well, I meant more the parties themselves.

**MS. PSAKI:** You're right, but there also is a long timeframe we still have left. One of the reasons committing to the nine-month timeframe was so important is because we knew there would be challenging periods throughout the process. But both sides remain committed to that, and so we'll continue to work through it.

**QUESTION:** But it doesn't sound like – unless you could disabuse us of the notion, it doesn't sound like since Secretary Kerry's last trip in early November that there have actually been any direct talks.

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't jump to that conclusion. We just have always said we wouldn't confirm every meeting.

**QUESTION:** Sure.

**MS. PSAKI:** So let me see if I can confirm any meetings since that point for all of you.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could you tell us if Ambassador Indyk is there now? Is he there? Is he in the region? Is he – Ambassador Indyk, where –

**MS. PSAKI:** He's here. I saw him this morning.

**QUESTION:** He's here. Okay.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay. Let's just do one or two more here.

Scott.

**QUESTION:** What is the U.S. view of what's going on in Thailand right now?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we certainly deeply regret the loss of life in Bangkok due to politically motivated violence. We condemn violence as a means to achieve political objectives and urge all sides to exercise restraint and respect the rule of law. We are concerned about the continuing political tension in Thailand, and we are following the situation closely. Peaceful protest and freedom of expression are important aspects of democracy, of course. Violence and seizure of public or private property, however, are not acceptable means of resolving political differences. We firmly believe all parties should work together to resolve differences through peaceful dialogue in ways that strengthen democracy and rule of law.

Ambassador Kenney spoke with the prime minister and – has spoken with the prime minister and opposition leaders to also encourage restraint and peaceful dialogue. You may have also seen that the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok issued a security message for U.S. citizens in Thailand explaining that large political demonstrations may continue in coming days – in the coming days, including at government facilities, in and outside of central Bangkok, and is advising them to avoid areas of demonstration and to exercise caution.

**QUESTION:** Following his talk with the prime minister, one of the main opposition leaders said that he would accept nothing short of her resignation. Is that a responsible position in the eyes of the United States?

**MS. PSAKI:** We just continue to encourage all parties to work together to resolve their differences. We, of course, have seen his comments, but I don't think we're going to weigh in further at this point, aside from encouraging restraint on the ground.

**QUESTION:** Would you weigh in on the general amnesty bill that the ruling party failed to get through parliament, which was one of the instigations for this?

**MS. PSAKI:** I know – I don't know if I've spoken to that in the past, Scott. I'd have to – I don't have anything for you on it at this particular moment, but I'm happy to follow up post-briefing.

Okay, let's do two more here. In the back, you've been very patient.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Michael Vincent from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. What's the U.S. response to the Australian Government's rejection of the U.S. company Archer Daniels Midland's bid for GrainCorp?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we are disappointed by the Government of Australia's decision to reject Archer Daniels Midland's proposed acquisition of GrainCorp. We do not – we do note that the Australian Treasurer Joe Hockey has expressed openness to approving an increase in ADM's current share in GrainCorp. The United States is the largest foreign investor – foreign direct investor in Australia, with 132 billion in investment projects to date, and we look forward to working closely with Australia's government to build stronger ties and investment – stronger trade and investment ties.

**QUESTION:** Just a quick follow-up.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Did – unrelated matter, but has the U.S. Government accepted private medical, legal, or religious information on Australian citizens as offered by Australian intelligence agencies?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have anything further or anything for you on a range of reports. I'm certainly not going to comment on any of them. As you know, we're undergoing our own review of these processes, which we expect to conclude by the end of the year.

**QUESTION:** Jen, back to ADM for a second.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Did – was this issue, this proposed sale, bid by ADM raised at the AUSMIN ministerial meetings?

**MS. PSAKI:** It's a good question, Matt. I'd have to check. It wasn't one raised while I was there, but let me check and see if it was.

**QUESTION:** And if it was, did – was – were you given any indication that this is the way your closest antipodal ally was going to go?

**MS. PSAKI:** I will check and see if it was even raised.

Okay, let's do one more. Go ahead, Samir.

**QUESTION:** Do you have a reaction to the draft constitution in Egypt today?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Can I throw a Bahrain question at the end of that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Why not?

Well, we continue to track the constitutional process with interest, and we'll examine the document carefully once it is finalized and sent to President Mansour, which we understand will occur tomorrow. The Egyptian people, of course, will decide the fate of the draft constitution in a referendum. We will continue to support a transition process that leads to an inclusive civilian government selected through free, fair, and transparent elections, and civilian government based on the rule of law, fundamental freedoms, accountability, and an open and competitive economy. So we will see when it is transferred, and we will take a close look at it.

Bahrain.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Do you have any view on the government --

**QUESTION:** A quick one on Egypt. Hold on. I'm sorry, Matt: You don't have any comment on the prohibition of religious parties in Egypt?

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, we'll wait to comment on it until it's been officially transferred. Obviously, there are steps in there we may be complimentary of and others we may not be.

**QUESTION:** Yes, please.

**QUESTION:** Does the decision of the – not to release this human rights campaigner when he was eligible to be released? It was yesterday or today.

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me see. I think I have something on this. One moment, Matt.

**QUESTION:** Mm-hmm. You can get it – if you just want to make it a TQ, that's fine.

**MS. PSAKI:** Yeah, that's fine. I believe I have something on it for you. Let's see. We continue to encourage Bahrain to take the necessary steps to promote reconciliation among Bahrainis, including permitting all sectors of society to voice their political views in a peaceful manner. We have seen reports that the head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights Nabeel Rajab – is that who you're talking about – okay --

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. PSAKI:** -- was denied early release today in Bahrain. We understand that he has served 18 months of his two-year prison sentence and is scheduled to be released in May of next year. We remain deeply concerned about the three-year prison sentence for leading illegal gatherings. We urge the Government of Bahrain to protect the universal rights of freedom of expression and assembly, just as we urge all elements of Bahraini society to engage in peaceful expressions of political opinion.

**QUESTION:** Do you think that he should've been released as was – as he could've been today?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I believe we are concerned about his – we were concerned about his three-year prison sentence, I believe. Let me check and see, but I believe that's what we're implying here.

**QUESTION:** I mean, this is not the first. I mean, there have been several other opposition activists and so forth that have been detained. I mean, does this cast doubt on your encouraging words earlier in the year about Bahrain's commitment to political reforms?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we certainly are encouraging them to take some step – to take necessary steps to promote reconciliation. And obviously, each time that there is a case like this, we have expressed concern. So I don't have any analysis as to what that will mean longer-term or about the overall relationship, but each time there has been an incident, we have certainly expressed our concern.

**QUESTION:** Well, but each time – you say each time that there's been an incident. I mean, there's a pattern of incidents. I mean, does that say something about their actual commitment to reforms?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't have any more analysis on it for you.

Thanks, everyone.

QUESTION: Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 3:18 p.m.)

DPB # 196

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